

Glossary

Protected Classes

There are 13 protected classes covered in the Minnesota Human Rights Act. These classes represent specific characteristics, like race, religion, sex or disability.

Race: such as Caucasian, African American, Asian or American Indian. Some people see themselves as belonging to more than one race.

Color: skin color.

Creed: a belief system. A creed is very important to the person who believes it. A creed is like a religion, but it does not have to involve a God or Gods.

Religion: a set of beliefs, values, and practices based on the teachings of a spiritual leader. Religion involves a God or Gods.

National Origin: what part of the world you come from, or where your ancestors lived.

Sex (gender): whether a person is male or female.

Marital Status: whether you are single, married or divorced.

Disability: a person has a disability if:

- He or she has a physical, sensory—blindness or deafness, for example—or mental impairment; and
- This impairment “materially interferes” with—it largely gets in the way of—a major life activity; or
- He or she has a record of this kind of impairment; or
- He or she is recognized as having this kind of impairment.

Not every injury or illness amounts to “disability” under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

Public Assistance: these are government programs that help people with low incomes or special needs. Some examples of public assistance are:

- Medicaid or Medical Assistance
- Food Support (food stamps)
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Housing Assistance or Section 8 Assistance
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- National School Lunch Program's free lunch program

Age: how old you are. This class is protected only in two areas, employment and education. If a minor—child under 18 years old—wants to file a discrimination charge, they must have a parent or legal guardian do it for them.

Sexual Orientation: whether someone is—or is thought to be—gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual or transgender.

Familial Status: someone who has children under 18 years old living with them. This class is protected in housing and employment.

Local Human Rights Commission Activity: you cannot be discriminated against because you serve with a local human rights commission. This class is only protected in employment.

Protected Areas

Under the Minnesota Human Rights Act, discrimination is illegal in business, credit, education, employment, housing, public accommodations and public services. These are called “protected areas.”

Employment: where you work, or a job you are applying for.

Housing: renting an apartment, or buying a house. Housing is also called “real property.”

Public Accommodations: any place generally open to the public, like:

- Grocery stores
- Restaurants
- Movie theaters
- Day care

Public Service: a place or a service run by the government. Some examples are:

- State parks
- City buses
- Libraries
- Police and fire departments
- City, county, and state departments of health

Education: any public or private school, or college, university or trade school.

Credit: an organization that gives loans, like a bank or a credit union.

Business: if you own a business, other businesses cannot discriminate against you.